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E.O. 12065: RDS-3 4/28/91 (HITCHCOCK, DAVID I.) OR-O
TAGS: SOPN, MASS, IS, SA
SUBJECT: AWACS CAPABILITIES PRESS GUIDANCE
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1. BASED ON STATE AND DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BRIEFINGS AND EVIDENTLY OTHER BACKGROUND DISCUSSIONS, US MEDIA HAVE BEEN REPORTING OVER PAST 4 DAYS CONSIDERABLE DETAILS CONCERNING CAPABILITY OF AWACS TO BE SOLD TO SAUDI ARABIA. FOR EXAMPLE, ACCORDING TO MICHAEL GETTLER OF "THE NEW YORK TIMES", DEFENSE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS AT A BRIEFING ON APRIL 24 TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE "PLANES WILL NOT CARRY THE KIND OF INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING EQUIPMENT THAT ALLOWS MONITORING OF OTHER NATIONS' ELECTRONIC AND COMMUNICATIONS TRAFFIC. NOR WILL THEY CONTAIN SPECIAL RADIOS RESISTANT TO ENEMY JAMMING NOW CARRIED BY THE US VERSIONS OF THE PLANE." IN THE "CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR" (NO DATE GIVEN IN WIRELESS FILE STORY), "US DEFENSE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS" ARE REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT "THE AIRBORNE WARNING CONTROL SYSTEMS AIRCRAFT WILL NOT ONLY LACK ANY COMMUNICATIONS INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING CAPABILITY, BUT WILL BE UNABLE TO SPOT TANKS AND ARMORED VEHICLES ON THE GROUND." THIS POINT WAS ALSO MADE IN A STATE DEPARTMENT APRIL 30 PRESS BRIEFING IN WHICH BRIEFER SAID "IT CANNOT DETECT MILITARILY-SIGNIFICANT GROUND ACTIVITY", A STORY WHICH APPEARED IN VARIOUS ISRAELI PAPERS.

2. MEANWHILE, ISRAELI MEDIA ARE DESCRIBING AWACS CAPABILITY IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL. IN THE APRIL 28 "HA'ARETZ" MILITARY CORRESPONDENT SCHIFF SAYS THE AWACS SYSTEM HAS "BEYOND THE HORIZON DETECTION RANGE OF 400 NAUTICAL MILES, FROM ALTITUDE ZERO TO 100,000 FEET. IT CAN, FOR INSTANCE, DETECT AND PINPOINT NOT ONLY OTHER AIRCRAFT, BUT TANK AND APC MOVEMENT AS WELL AS AIR DEFENSE, NAVAL AND ISRAELI MISSILE RADAR SYSTEMS." WHILE SCHIFF ACKNOWLEDGES THAT AWACS TO BE SOLD TO SAUDI ARABIA COULD BE RENDERED LESS EFFECTIVE THROUGH MODIFICATION OF ITS EQUIPMENT, "THE PRECEDENT OF THE F-15 ADD-ONS AND THE SAUDI BLACKMAILING AND BARGAINING CLOUT SUGGEST THAT THE SAME THING COULD HAPPEN WITH THE AWACS."

3. OTHER PRESS STORIES FROM WASHINGTON HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE SPECIFIC EQUIPMENT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE AWACS TO BE SOLD TO SAUDI ARABIA IS STILL BEING WORKED OUT.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY E. Schmelzer DATE 7/2/85
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